

Why I'm Spiritually Dry, Part 5 - Romans 14:15-18 – June 2nd, 2013

- Today's teaching will be part five of a series I've titled; "Why I'm Spiritually Dry."
- In our text this morning the Apostle Paul turns a corner going from the liberty we have in Christ to the love we have for our brother in Christ.
- Before we jump in I think I should set the stage as it were with the first five causes of spiritual dryness that we've seen up to verse fourteen.

1. Legalism (Verses 1-2)

2. Judgmentalism (Verses 3-4)

3. Denominationalism (Verses 5-9)

4. Phariseeism (Verses 10-12)

5. Liberalism (Verses 13-14)

6. Narcissism (Verses 15-18)

- v15-16 He says don't distress or destroy another in your liberty because if you do you no longer act in love for the one whom Christ died for.
- v17 He goes on to say that the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- v18 Paul then gives us the reason for this saying that anyone who serves Christ in this way is both pleasing to God and approved by men.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment as I attempt to answer some questions that verses fifteen through eighteen seem to be asking.
- The first question I believe these verses are asking is, why would no longer acting in love rise to the level of destroying a brother in Christ.
- Actually, this answers two questions in one, the first of which is what is the definition of narcissism, and secondly why is it so destructive.

In order to tackle this, I'll begin by quoting the Mayo Clinic staff, as I believe their definition is superb, related to, what they term as, "Narcissistic Personality Disorder." Here's what they write, "Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental disorder in which people have an inflated sense of their own importance and a deep need for admiration. Those with narcissistic personality disorder believe that they're superior to others and have little regard for other people's feelings. But behind this mask of ultra-confidence lies a fragile self-esteem, vulnerable to the slightest criticism. Narcissistic personality disorder is one of several ...conditions in which people have traits that cause them to feel and behave in socially distressing ways, limiting their ability to function in relationships and in other areas of their life, such as home, work, or school.

www.mayoclinic.com/health/narcissistic-personality-disorder/DS00652

- In other words, not only can narcissists create social distress, they can also cause spiritual dryness and even worse spiritual destruction.
- To herald self love over and above brotherly love gets dangerously close to destroying them by pressuring them to go against conscience.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest, left unchecked, narcissism has the propensity to so injure the soul of another they perish in the end.

Adam Clarke - "This puts the unloving conduct of the person in question in the strongest light, because it supposes that the weak brother may be so stumbled as to fall and perish finally; even the man for whom Christ died. To injure a man in his circumstances is bad; to injure him in his person is worse; to injure him in his reputation is still worse; and to injure his soul is worst of all. No wickedness, no malice, can go farther than to injure and destroy the soul: thy uncharitable conduct may proceed thus far; therefore thou art highly criminal before God."

NARCISSISTIC SELF-LOVE	CHRISTIAN BROTHERLY-LOVE
I may know I'm hurting you, but I don't care, I only care about myself	I won't knowingly hurt you because I care about you, I'll deny myself
I'm more important than you so what you need doesn't matter to me	You're so important to me that what you need matters most to me
I think more highly of myself than I do of you so you cater to me	I think as highly of you as myself so let's serve one another in love
I need you to talk as much about me as I talk about myself	I will talk as much about you as I'm already talking about myself
I will envy you if I think you are doing better or have more than I do	I will be happy for you if you are doing better or have more than I do
I will become hypersensitive and resentful to any who criticize me	I'll appreciate you for loving me enough to offer constructive criticism
I will exploit sabotage and manipulate you to further my own agenda	I love you too much to be exploited sabotaged and manipulated

- Now that we've defined what narcissism is and identified how destructive narcissism is let's answer another question that our text is asking.
- Namely, why narcissism cannot only usher in a dryness and barrenness in my Christian life, it also wreaks havoc in another Christian's life.
- Here's how I get there, the Bible is replete with Narcissists who caused great peril for themselves and in so doing destroyed others as well.

- Though not exhaustive, here are a number of examples of Narcissism in the scriptures and the destruction it left in its evil and awful wake.
- Korah, the cousin of Moses, who formed a coup under the banner of his self-inflated importance led to his death and thousands with him.
- Absalom, King David's son, was the quintessential narcissist in that by attempting to murder his father he meets with his and others death.

- King Nebuchadnezzar was so narcissistic that God made him go insane and live like the wild animals eating grass like cattle for 7-years.
- Time doesn't permit me to talk of the many other narcissists, so suffice it to say, I end with King Nebuchadnezzar because of how it ends.
- Here's what I'm thinking, in the end, King Nebuchadnezzar repents and as such, God restores him vis-à-vis God having to first humble him.

Daniel 4:34-37 NIV At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. (35) All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" (36) At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. (37) Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.